RESEARCH REPORT

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# WHY WE NEED PRO-PASTORALIST POLICIES

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AFSA ALLIANCE FOR FOOD SOVEREIGNTY IN AFRICA

CIDSE Together for global justice

IYRP 2026 INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF RANGELANDS AND PASTORALISTS

Research Centre Agroecology, Water and Resilience | Coventry University

# SUMMARY

In this research report, we explore the importance of pastoralism in Eastern Africa (section 1). We identify the main challenges faced by pastoralists today (section 2) and present our vision for pastoralists' future (section 3). We detail seven measures that African states and the EU can implement to support pastoralism (section 4).

# KEY REPORT MESSAGES

- Pastoralism holds tremendous socio-economic significance while contributing to territorial and climatic resilience, ecological balance and cultural diversity. Yet pastoralism continues to be misunderstood and undermined. 2026 is the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists. Let's support pastoralists!
- European policies and projects in the areas of biodiversity, nature conservation, agriculture, trade and climate change have a significant impact on pastoralism and on the human rights of pastoralists in Eastern Africa.
- We call on European institutions and policymakers to recognise, valorise, protect and support pastoralism. By investing in pro-pastoralist policies and programmes, European institutions can promote social and political stability, environmental resilience and economic inclusion in Eastern Africa.
- The livestock sector tends to be regarded negatively in national climate and biodiversity strategies. Livestock is seen as a major contributor to greenhouse gas emissions, as well as a cause of biodiversity loss via ecosystem degradation. The positive contributions of pastoralism to biodiversity and food security are not properly considered.
- We call on Eastern African countries to include pastoralism-based strategies in their national climate and biodiversity strategies.
- We identify 7 pro-pastoralist measures and call on the EU and Eastern African States to: (1) Protect pastoralists' lands and livestock mobility; (2) Support food and water security and economic resilience; (3) Invest in decentralised infrastructure development and ensure people-led service delivery in pastoral areas; (4) Ensure socio-ecological and climate resilience; (5) Enhance pastoralist institutions, voices and culture; (6) Raise awareness and address negative stereotypes; (7) Finance public research on pastoralism.

# CONTENTS



# 1. WHAT IS PASTORALISM?

## What is pastoralism?

Pastoralism is a widespread livelihood centred on herding and managing domesticated livestock on rangelands including grasslands. Pastoralists live in highly variable environments (e.g. arid, mountainous, tundra). Pastoral mobility takes advantage of variability. Pastoralist forms of land tenure vary considerably, with many relying primarily on extensive and communal land use. More than an ancestral livelihood, pastoralism is a dynamic and flexible system, resiliently reconfiguring itself in response to external pressures and uncertainties. What makes pastoralism distinctive to other livestock systems is its ability to use natural environments characterised by unpredictable variability not only to make a living but also to support biodiversity and rangeland health. This ability is grounded in pastoralist institutions and production strategies such as strategic mobility and shared grazing arrangements on common-pool resources (see Box 2).

## Why is pastoralism important?

Pastoralism in Eastern Africa is practised in a variety of landscapes and ecosystems, spanning drylands, cooler highlands and wetlands characterised by highly diverse grasslands, shrubs and woodlands. According to the African Union (AU) Policy Framework on Pastoralism, an estimated 268 million pastoralists in Africa (over a quarter of the total population) live on over 40% of the continent's total land surface.[2] Nearly 75% of the land surface in Eastern Africa consists of drylands. Indigenous and local communities in Eastern Africa, such as the Maasai (Kenya and Tanzania), Karamojong (Uganda) and Borana (Ethiopia and Kenya), depend on pastoralism. Crop farming has long played a complementary role in many pastoral systems in Eastern Africa, supporting but not replacing livestock, which remains the central economic and social foundation of pastoralist households. As a result, pastoralists often shift in and out of crop cultivation based on changing circumstances.

*Credit: MISA*

*1 We sincerely thank Ced Hesse, Makko Sinandei, Florence Krick, Ken Otieno, Pablo Manzano, Loupa Pius, Sigrun Zwanger and Laura Mahler for their useful feedback and comments.*

*2 CELEP. 2020. Towards a new EU–Africa Strategy: CELEP Position Paper. https://www.celep.info/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Towards-a-new-EU-Africa-strategy-CELEP-input_FINAL2.pdf*

## BOX 1 – TERMINOLOGY IS IMPORTANT!

**Strategic mobility vs. rotational grazing.** We prefer to use strategic mobility because it highlights pastoralists' ability to use natural environments characterised by unpredictable variability to make a living and support biodiversity and rangeland health. Pastoral mobility can take various forms, among others: opportunistic movements (depending on the availability of grazing resources, occurrence of disease and/or socio-economic factors), seasonal transhumance, which involves a relatively regular temporal and spatial pattern of movement, and semi-settled movements, which are made in pastoral systems where the main household and some of the livestock stay in one location and only the herders move with part of the herds.[3] In contrast, rotational grazing tends to be associated with holistic rangeland management (HRM) and other approaches based on Western science and pushed on pastoralists as "modern" ways of managing rangelands.

**Variable resources vs. scarce resources.** We prefer to use variable resources in time and space because the term highlights the high variability of pastoralists' environments rather than scarce resources which suggest these environments are intrinsically lacking in potential often justifying problematic interventions.

**Pastoralists are diverse.** We prefer not to place pastoralists into categories such as nomadic or semi-nomadic or sedentary as these do not reflect the diversity of their organising strategies. Nor is it how pastoralists define themselves. Some of these categories, such as "nomadic", are associated with negative stereotypes. Nomads are seen by some as wandering aimlessly and not as skilled and flexible pastoralists deriving a livelihood from making use of variability.

**Pastoralists vs. agropastoralists.** We prefer not to oppose "pure" pastoralists to agropastoralists, described as people who gain their livelihood primarily from both growing arable crops (agronomy) and grazing livestock (pastoralism). Pastoralism may include activities that link livestock production, crop farming and forest farming in a complementary or synergetic way, i.e. through agropastoralism, silvopastoralism or agrosilvopastoralism. From that perspective, pastoralism is an example of agroecology in dry areas because it is a form of sustainable agriculture in tune with nature, optimising the use of biological processes and ecosystem functions, and relying primarily on using and recycling local resources.[4]

**Open property vs. open access.** Many customary pastoral systems operate according to some form of open property regime, allowing regulated access to forage, water and markets. This does not mean that they are "open access" or unregulated. Rather, open property governance systems establish that everyone has equal rights to access the resources as and when needed, e.g. all livestock owners have equal rights to forage resources. In pastoralism, open property regimes function as complex adaptive systems and are enforced through norms and rules.

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*3 Kelly D, Waters-Bayer A, Ulambayar T, Johnsen KI, Magero C & Niamir-Fuller M. 2024. Pastoralism and rangelands: people and institutions – a glossary of terms. Version 1. International Rangeland Congress in collaboration with Global Alliance for the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists (IYRP). https://www.iyrp.info/sites/default/files/2025-01/Glossary_pastoralism-rangelands_people-institutions-2024.pdf*

*4 Ibid.*

*Credit: MISA*

*Here we present the various contributions of pastoralism to land use, food security, the economy, the environment, climate change adaptation and mitigation, and the preservation of culture.*

**Land use:** Pastoralism is a highly effective land-use system that supports local communities and ensures ecological integrity, despite drivers of land-use change and uncertainty such as expansion of cultivation, industrialisation, climate change and exacerbated risk of degradation. In addition, pastoralism is a rational and economically viable land-use system able to generate significant returns in Africa's drylands. It is the most ecologically sound and economically efficient way of making productive use of resources that are highly variable in time and space in these areas. What is distinctive about pastoralism is its unique ability to use natural environments characterised by highly unpredictable variability in resources.[5]

Pastoralists have institutions and strategies, such as strategic mobility and reciprocal and controlled grazing arrangements, to take advantage of the variable and highly unpredictable opportunities that the rangelands can provide. Sharing pastoral resources as common property or open property[6] (see Box 1) enables pastoralists to be resilient. Mobility allows pastoralists to manage variable resources in a sustainable manner; to flee drought, disease or conflict; to access markets; and to preserve their capital base by bringing their herds to the most nutritious pastures with lower risk of animal disease at a given point in time. Not all pastoralists follow a mobile lifestyle, and some may move their livestock without moving their families (semi-settled movements). Pastoralist strategies protect rangeland plant species diversity and tree cover, enhancing biodiversity and optimising the health and productivity of their livestock and the rangelands that sustain them.

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*5 Krätli S. 2015. Valuing variability. new perspectives on climate resilient drylands development. International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), London. https://www.iied.org/10128iied; Krätli S, Huelsebusch C, Brooks S & Kaufmann B. 2013. Pastoralism: a critical asset for food security under global climate change. Animal Frontiers 3 (1): 42–50. https://doi.org/10.2527/af.2013-0007; Hesse C & Catley A. 2023. Pastoralism in Africa: a primer. Washington DC: United States Agency for International Development (USAID)/Meford: Feinstein International Center/Edinburgh: IIED. https://fic.tufts.edu/publication-item/pastoralism-in-africa-a-primer/; Scoones I. 1995. Living with uncertainty: new directions in pastoral development in Africa. London: Intermediate Technology Publications.*

*6 Robinson L. 2019. Open property and complex mosaics: variants in tenure regimes across pastoralist social-ecological systems. International Journal of the Commons 13(1); Robinson L & Flintan F. 2022. Can formalisation of pastoral land tenure overcome its paradoxes? Reflections from East Africa. Pastoralism 12(1): 34.*

## BOX 2 – SOME DEFINITIONS[7]

**Common-pool resources:** Resources (e.g. land, water) collectively owned by all members of a community or group who share the right to use the resources and are equally responsible for maintaining them. The community or group controls the use of the resources and can exclude non-members from using them. It governs the resources by making rules and arrangements for their enforcement. The term "commons" is widely used to describe land held as common property. Mobile pastoral systems often operate on such common land.

**Transhumance:** Seasonal transhumance/rotation involves a relatively regular temporal and spatial pattern of movement that can be altered depending on natural factors such as droughts, floods, fire or changes in the onset of seasons, or socio-economic factors such as markets or cultural events. Pastoralists move herds of livestock between seasonal pastures, either horizontally (from one climatic zone to another, e.g. between semiarid and subhumid areas) or vertically (from one altitude to another, i.e. between highland and lowland areas).

**Sedentarisation:** Process by which nomadic or transhumant pastoralists become settled in one location. This may entail gradual settlement of pastoralists as a result of inducements or incentives provided by government policy, such as settlement schemes, or of evictions and other forceful interventions, and/or of market forces, internal drivers (e.g. poverty), service availability, extreme weather events or loss of rights of access to grazing land and other pastoral resources. Also called "settlement" of pastoralists.

**Pastoralist institutions:** The formal or informal rules, norms, customs, behaviours, laws and policies that guide pastoralists' interactions with natural resources, livestock and other people. Pastoralist institutions influence who has access to and control over which resources and, in the case of conflict over resources, may mediate and create space for negotiation and agreement, e.g. through customary leaders. Pastoralist institutions guide all aspects of pastoralist life, not only human interactions with natural resources. This is a subset of customary/traditional institutions.

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*7 Kelly et al. 2024. Pastoralism and rangelands: people and institutions – a glossary of terms. Version 1. International Rangeland Congress in collaboration with Global Alliance for the IYRP.*

*Credit: MISA*

**Food security:** Pastoralism contributes to food security and nutrition of both high- and low-income households, producing almost 90% of the meat consumed in Eastern Africa.[8] It produces milk and meat – particularly protein-rich foods — and other products, supplying them through value chains that operate efficiently at relatively low economic costs, as long as trade is not artificially biased in favour of imported products. Pastoralist production also operates at much lower environmental costs than those incurred by imported products.

Pastoralism also helps raise crop-farming productivity by providing manure, animals for draught and transport, seasonal labour and technical knowledge for the rising number of farmers now investing in livestock. Products coming from animals raised on natural pastures are relatively healthier (compared to animal products from intensive systems) – they have more vitamins, healthy fats, antioxidants and higher levels of omega-3 and conjugated linoleic acid, etc.[9]

**Economic value:** Pastoralism is a cornerstone of Eastern Africa's economy, sustaining millions of people through extensive livestock production adapted to arid and semi-arid lands. It provides employment and livelihood for up to 20 million people in Eastern Africa. In the arid and semi-arid lands of Kenya, it provides 90% of the employment opportunities and 95% of the family income. Pastoralism makes a significant contribution to the Gross Domestic Products (GDPs) of the Eastern African countries. In Kenya, the pastoral sector has an overall estimated value of €750 million and an annual marketed value of €50–80 million, contributing 13% to the GDP.[10] In Ethiopia, the livestock sector contributes 19% to the GDP and, in Uganda, 8% to the GDP and 17% to the agricultural GDP. On average, livestock contributes 57% to the agricultural GDP in the countries under the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in Eastern Africa. Recognising pastoralism as a viable and sustainable livelihood is essential to achieving inclusive development in Eastern Africa. In environments characterised by high variability and unpredictability, the more mobile the system, the greater the returns.

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*8 CELEP. 2017. Recognising the role and value of pastoralism and pastoralists. http://www.celep.info/wp- content/uploads/2017/05/Policybrief-CELEP-May-2017-Value-of-pastoralism.pdf*

*9 CELEP. 2017. Recognising the role and value of pastoralism and pastoralists. http://www.celep.info/wp- content/uploads/2017/05/Policybrief-CELEP-May-2017-Value-of-pastoralism.pdf*

*10 Ibid.*

*Credit: MISA*

**Environmental value:** Pastoralists and their livestock have played and continue to play a critical role in shaping the ecology of rangeland landscapes in Eastern Africa through grazing and controlled fire.[11] They control bush encroachment and keep habitats favourable for wildlife, contributing to biodiversity conservation. Mobile pastoralists use the drylands in ways that protect the environment, sequester carbon and enhance biodiversity.[12]

Grazing animals disperse plant seeds that stick to the animals' bodies and aid the germination of other seeds by eating and excreting them. The grazing patterns managed by pastoralists help maintain and sometimes even increase biodiversity, including that of pollinators. The hoofs of their livestock break up hard soil crusts, allowing water to infiltrate and seeds to sprout. Pastoralism is based primarily on natural vegetation with little or no supplementary feeding and is more ecologically friendly than intensive animal production.

**Climate change adaptation and mitigation:** Pastoralism is a production system geared towards dealing with and harnessing uncertainty, which is key in the face of the climate crisis. Thanks to their mobility and reciprocal and negotiated forms of access to natural resources, pastoralists can adapt to the variability of resources. They are better positioned to accommodate climate change than are livestock keepers and crop farmers tied to sedentary land uses. The pastoralists' low-external-input system[13] of producing food and other products with very low use of fossil fuels shows the way to a future of climate-neutral agrifood systems. Pastoralism is practised primarily on rangelands, which play an important role in mitigating climate change, as they are important carbon sinks. Sustainable grazing management can optimise the potential of rangelands to mitigate climate change. Pastoralists possess a sophisticated understanding of livestock genetic selection processes. As climate change brings greater environmental, social and economic uncertainty, harnessing pastoralist knowledge and experience in livestock management is key.[14]

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*11 McGahey D, Davies J, Hagelberg N & Ouedraogo R. 2014. Pastoralism and the green economy – a natural nexus? Nairobi: IUCN and UNEP; Yılmaz E, Zogib L, Urivelarrea P & Çağlayan SD. 2019. Mobile pastoralism and protected areas: conflict, collaboration, and connectivity. Parks – International Journal of Protected Areas and Conservation 25(1).*

*12 Soussana J-F, Tichit MM, Lecomte P & Dumont B. 2015. Agroecology: integration with livestock. In: Agroecology for food security and nutrition: proceedings of the FAO international symposium 18–19 September 2014, Rome, Italy (Rome: FAO), pp 225–249.*

*13 Manzano P et al. 2021. Toward a holistic understanding of pastoralism. One Earth 4(5): 651–665. https://linkinghub.elsevier.com/retrieve/pii/S2590332221002311*

*14 FAO (online page) FAO Pastoralist Knowledge Hub. https://www.fao.org/pastoralist-knowledge-hub/en/*

*Credit: Freepik*

**Social and cultural value:** Pastoralism is often emblematic of cultural distinctiveness shaped by its deeply intertwined relationship with the land. It is deeply embedded in local cultural systems, often reflecting a rich tapestry of Indigenous knowledge and social institutions that reflect an irreplaceable intangible heritage, passed down to the next generations. It represents one of the very last strongholds of cultural diversity and plurality in our globalised society. Pastoral systems are vital in resource management, conflict resolution and resilience against socio-economic challenges. Pastoralists sometimes self-identify as a distinct community possessing unique cultural and societal systems that distinguish them from the dominant society.[15] Their cultural uniqueness reflects a shared history and collective memory they proudly reclaim. Pastoralist societies range from lineage-based clans to tribal confederacies, each adapted to and reflective of their specific environmental knowledge and their relationship with the land. Grazing landscapes are not abstract territories but living and evolving cultural entities endowed with memory, meaning and spiritual significance.

Pastoral mobility thus preserves complex cultural and ecological landscapes where tangible and intangible heritages intersect with ecologically significant practices. Pastoralism is often embedded in a decentralised authority system, according to which elders, clan leaders and other respected figures mediate disputes, regulate resource use and negotiate access to land with state authorities.[16] Such a decentralised system allows for the collective and sustainable use of natural resources.

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*15 Hodgson DL. 2011.Being Maasai, becoming indigenous: postcolonial politics in a neoliberal world. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.*

*16 Galaty J. 2015. Pastoralism in anthropology. International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences. 10.1016/B978-0-08-097086-8.12124-5.*

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International advocacy by pastoralist organisations has led to the declaration of 2026 as the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists (IYRP2026)

# 2. WHAT ARE THE MAIN CHALLENGES FOR PASTORALISTS IN EASTERN AFRICA?

Pastoralists in Eastern Africa are facing several interconnected challenges that generate impoverishment and disenfranchisement. Firstly, they suffer induced land scarcity, which hinders their mobility needs and access to their customary lands. Additionally, more extreme climatic variations undermine the system's adaptability and flexibility. Lastly, government institutions can violate their human and customary rights, leading to socio-economic and political marginalisation.

*We review here the main challenges facing pastoralists in Eastern Africa:*

**Access to land and mobility:** As a result of colonisation and post-independence sedentarisation (see Box 2), modernisation and rural development policies, as well as obstacles to mobility, many pastoralists have lost access to a large part of their grazing areas, including access to strategic areas with permanent water in the dry season.

Consequently, their options for managing unpredictable availability of resources have been considerably reduced.

Large-scale land acquisition for irrigated crop farming, fortress conservation,[17] safari tourism, commercially oriented game hunting, industrialisation, wind parks, pipelines, extraction of mineral resources and other private investment or commercial development schemes have all hindered or limited pastoralists' access to their communal lands.[18]

The commodification and privatisation of communal lands and the conversion of rangelands to other land uses have harmed their traditional mobile and flexible land-use system. Increasingly, pastoralists are facing difficulties in securing and defending their rights to use, access, control and make decisions over their land, be it for grazing, browsing[19] and foraging, or for accessing water resources for their herds. In addition, slow action by governments towards the legal recognition of communal pastoral lands has led to a generalised lack of protection.

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*17 Toutain B, de Visscher M-, & Dulieu D. 2004. Pastoralism and protected areas: lessons learned from Western Africa. Human Dimensions of Wildlife 9: 287–295. https://doi.org/10.1080/108071200490505963*

*18 UN. 2024. Report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights of Indigenous Peoples: Mobile Indigenous Peoples (A/79/160). Prepared by José Francisco Calí Tzay. United Nations Human Rights Council. https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/thematic-reports/a79160-report-special-rapporteur-rights-indigenous-peoples-jose*

*19 Browsing refers to animals such as goats or camels, feeding on leaves, twigs and shrubs, as opposed to grazing, which refers to eating grasses and herbs.*

*Credit: MISA*

State-led policies too often undermine pastoralists' sovereignty, as manifested by land privatisation or fenced conservation areas. Restrictions on herd mobility, also across subnational and national borders, have hurt pastoralists' ability to make productive use of the drylands, including for their food security. In war contexts, these restrictions are made more severe due to conflicts and associated safety concerns.

Additionally, land encroachment and the restriction of pastoralists' activities through the creation of "no-go" zones generate conflicts, increase degradation of rangeland due to higher pressure on remaining land, disrupt ecological connectivity and disrupt traditional institutions, disproportionately impacting specific groups such as poorer pastoralists and women.[20] Many conservation organisations, including globally leading ones, have unfortunately contributed to the imposition of top-down policies that restrict or ban mobility and access to rangelands and transform sustainable pastoralism into intensive livestock production. In many cases, this imposition has been justified by relying on inadequate indicators.[21] The impacts of these changes are highly gendered, and it is important to understand how women's roles, responsibilities and status are shifting as a result of changes in pastoralists' practices and customary institutions.[22]

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*20 CELEP. 2018. Policy brief: Sustainable pastoralism and land-use change in the East African drylands; Studley J. 2018. Indigenous sacred natural sites and spiritual governance: the legal case for juristic personhood. London: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429455797*

*21 Yılmaz E, Zogib L, Urivelarrea P & Çağlayan SD. 2019. Mobile pastoralism and protected areas: conflict, collaboration, and connectivity. Parks – International Journal of Protected Areas and Conservation 25(1).*

*22 Flintan F. 2021. Pastoral women, tenure and governance. ILRI Research Report 92. Nairobi: International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI).*

*Credit: MISA*

**Human rights violations:** Key abuses include violations of the rights to health, education and food, as well as violations of their civil and political rights. Pastoralist communities tend to face poor access to healthcare, formal education and infrastructure, as these services are typically designed for sedentary populations. Education systems also often fail to reflect mobile lifestyles or Indigenous knowledge and belief systems, reinforcing marginalisation and stigma.[23] In addition, despite their vital role in food production, less mobile pastoralists experience high rates of undernutrition compared to other segments of society or compared with highly mobile pastoralists, particularly during droughts.[24] The denial of access to grazing land and water points has led to livelihood collapse among many pastoralist communities, with consequent experience of hunger and forced migration.[25] Food price increases have a direct negative impact on pastoralists because they need to buy a substantial proportion of their food needs in the form of cereals. For some poorer pastoralists, up to 85% of food needs are met through direct purchase; hence, a slight increase in food price can threaten their food security. Land-use changes—whether for cultivation, conservation, tourism or carbon-offset projects—are often undertaken without Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC), especially affecting mobile pastoralists and undermining their civil rights and customary land-tenure systems.[26] In some places, reports highlight the use of militarised security forces—sometimes in collaboration with private tourism or conservation interests—against unarmed pastoralists.

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*23 CELEP. 2019. Pastoralism & the SDGs: how supporting pastoralism can help realise the Sustainable Development Goals. https://www.celep.info/pastoralism-and-the-sdgs/*

*24 Fratkin et al. 2006. Is Settling Good for Pastoralists? The Effects of Pastoral Sedentarization on Children's Nutrition, Growth, and Health Among Rendille and Ariaal of Marsabit District, Northern Kenya. Conference paper available at: https://www.saga.cornell.edu/saga/ilri0606/23fratkin-nathan-roth.pdf*

*25 Kwokwo Barume A. 2010. Land rights of Indigenous Peoples in Africa with special focus on Central, Eastern and Southern Africa. IWGIA Document 115. Copenhagen: International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA) https://iwgia.org/images/publications/0002_Land_Rights_of_Indigenous_Peoples_In_Africa.pdf; IWGIA. 2016. Report 23 – Tanzanian pastoralists threatened: evictions, human rights violations and loss of livelihoods. IWGIA with PINGO's Forum, PAICODEO and UCRT. https://iwgia.org/images/documents/popular-publications/report-23-tanzania-for-eb.pdf*

*26 MISA. 2025. Soil carbon credits: another wave of land alienation in northern Tanzania? https://afsafrica.org/maasai-international-solidarity-alliance-demands-moratorium-on-soil-carbon-projects-in-northern-tanzania/*

*Credit: MISA*

Cases include the burning of homes, denial of civil and voting rights, destruction of property and social services infrastructure, humanitarian aid suspension and physical abuse, raising serious concerns about state accountability and militarised land control.[27] The erosion of traditional land rights (disenfranchisement) and the criminalisation of mobility-based food-production systems, compounded with geopolitical shifts in the region and climate change, are contributing to deepening poverty, youth displacement and humanitarian crises in dryland regions. Rising land pressures and external interventions (land grabs and land-use changes) are driving conflict, forced migration and community breakdown.[28] The transformation of rural-urban relations—driven by industrialisation, urban sprawl and infrastructural development—is further deepening the socio-economic marginalisation of pastoralist communities.

Traditional livelihoods are increasingly devalued by state institutions and markets that prioritise sedentary agriculture, mining and urban expansion. As pastoral territories shrink due to land conversion and fragmentation, pastoralists are often excluded from infrastructure investment and social services. Additionally, market participation is difficult, as market structures are also fundamentally skewed against them: despite contributing significantly to food security and landscape health, pastoralists face exclusion from formal value chains, lack access to credit and subsidies, and must operate in pricing regimes that ignore the ecological and nutritional value of their products.

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*27 Currier A. 2022. Flawed plans for relocation of the Maasai from the Ngorongoro Conservation Area. Oakland: The Oakland Institute.*

*28 OCHA. 2023. Horn of Africa drought situation report. https://reliefweb.int/report/ethiopia/drought-horn-africa-situation-update-july-202; CELEP. 2019. Pastoralism & the SDGs: how supporting pastoralism can help realise the Sustainable Development Goals. https://www.celep.info/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/SDG-Paper-February-2019R.pdf*

*Credit: MISA*

**Drought and extreme climatic variations:** While pastoral mobility is well positioned to respond to and take advantage of climate variations, this adaptability is increasingly undermined by land loss, limited mobility and inappropriate policies, preventing pastoralists from implementing their livelihood strategies.

These impediments make pastoralists vulnerable to the effects of droughts and extreme climate events, which act as external stressors exposing the weaknesses of current policies. Drought is one of the costliest and deadliest disasters on a global scale. Worldwide, droughts cause over 15% of disaster-related damages and losses, unleashing severe hardship in affected local communities.[29] Droughts account for 86% of livestock losses and are the most lethal hazard to livestock.[30]

Drylands are climate "hotspots" where prolonged aridity undermines soil health, accelerates land erosion and weakens rangeland regeneration.[31] Countries in Eastern Africa experienced their longest and most severe drought in over 40 years, with five consecutive failed rainy seasons, affecting more than 36 million people.[32] Droughts need not be catastrophic for pastoralists; what turns them into crises is the erosion of mobility and the loss of key resources impeding the deployment of their risk-management strategies. These losses are not easily recoverable; it can take years for a household to rebuild herds, during which families are pushed into chronic poverty. This climate-induced stress undermines pastoralists' traditional resilience strategies and deepens their vulnerability to shocks. Drought and environmental degradation have specific social impacts, often increasing the workload on women and girls, requiring additional unpaid care, domestic and communal work.[33]

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*29 UNCCD. 2022. Drought in numbers 2022 – Restoration for readiness and resilience. https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/2022-05/Drought%20in%20Numbers.pdf*

*30 UNCCD & FAO. 2024. Women-led solutions for drought resilience. https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/2024-10/20241005_women-led-DRAFT_V6.pdf*

*31 CELEP. 2019. Pastoralism & the SDGs: how supporting pastoralism can help realise the Sustainable Development Goals. https://www.celep.info/pastoralism-and-the-sdgs/*

*32 OCHA. 2023. Horn of Africa drought situation report. https://reliefweb.int/report/ethiopia/drought-horn-africa-situation-update-july-202; UNCCD. 2022. Drought in numbers 2022 – Restoration for readiness and resilience.*

*33 UNCDD. 2022. Study on the differentiated impacts of land degradation, desertification and drought on women and men. https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/2022-11/Gender%20study%20.pdf*

*Credit: CABI*

**Invasive species:** Invasive species, such as Prosopis juliflora, spread rapidly in degraded zones, crowding out Indigenous grasses essential for livestock.[34] While rangelands can act as carbon sinks, their capacity to sequester carbon is highly sensitive to drought and ecological changes.[35] These shifts reduce rangelands' carbon sequestration potential, directly impeding climate mitigation efforts. Additionally, the spread of invasive species has become a major ecological threat to pastoralist livelihoods. Introduced in the region to stabilise soils and provide fodder, Prosopis has instead overrun natural rangelands—reducing the growth of native, palatable grasses and diminishing the land's grazing capacity. Consequently, rangelands are now facing reduced productivity. In invaded areas, livestock are forced–because of lack of other natural forage–to consume large quantities of Prosopis pods, which can cause digestive harm and dietary imbalances, leading to notable declines in both livestock and wildlife populations.

Combined with increasingly frequent droughts, these invasions accelerate soil erosion and land degradation, stripping the land of its fertility and reducing its capacity to regenerate vegetation.[36] As natural grasses disappear and soil health deteriorates, rangelands become increasingly unpredictable and fragile, pushing pastoral systems beyond their coping thresholds. For pastoralists, the degradation of rangeland quality due to invasive species and drought directly undermines food security, income and mobility, further eroding the sustainability of their livelihoods and their ability to adapt to a changing climate. Despite their resilience, pastoralist communities need urgent support to maintain mobility corridors, secure grazing land and co-develop adaptive strategies to climate change that integrate traditional knowledge.

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*34 Kibet S & van Wilgen BW. 2024. Prosopis invasions in Eastern Africa's rangelands: impacts and management challenges. In: Schaffner U, van Wilgen BW, Ehrensperger A & Bekele K (eds), The ecology and management of invasive prosopis trees in Eastern Africa (Wallingford: CABI), pp 108–120; Wakshum Shiferaw. 2021. Effects of invasion level of Prosopis juliflora on native species diversity and regeneration in Afar region, Northeast Ethiopia. International Soil and Water Conservation Research doi: 10.1016/j.iswcr.2021.04.003.*

*35 Chen X, Chen HYH, Chen C, Ma Z, Searle EB, Yu Z & Huang Z. 2020. Effects of plant diversity on soil carbon in diverse ecosystems: a global meta-analysis. Biological Reviews 95: 167–183. https://doi.org/10.1111/brv.12554*

*36 OCHA. 2023. Horn of Africa drought situation report. https://reliefweb.int/report/ethiopia/drought-horn-africa-situation-update-july-202; UNCCD. 2022. Drought in numbers 2022 – Restoration for readiness and resilience.*

**Contradictory climate and biodiversity strategies and carbon credit projects:** Increasing efforts to mitigate the impacts of climate change and/or to protect the environment, such as the 30x30 biodiversity target in the Kunming Montreal agreement, tend to ignore the presence of pastoralists and the socio-ecological contributions of pastoralism in the face of increased climate variability. Not only is this a missed opportunity, but it could also lead to potentially negative impacts.[37] An analysis of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs in the framework of the Paris Agreement) and National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs in the framework of the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity) in Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda and Ethiopia reveals that pastoralism as a climate or biodiversity strategy is mentioned explicitly only twice–in Kenya's latest NDC and NBSAP (See Annex 1 for overview).

Overall, the livestock sector is regarded in these documents as a major contributor to greenhouse gas emissions, as well as a cause of biodiversity loss via ecosystem degradation. However, the documents are not clear on whether intensive livestock operations or pastoral systems are at fault. In a few cases, pastoralism is explicitly designated as the culprit (e.g. Uganda's NDC, Tanzania's NBSAP). Uganda's NDC, for example, establishes "zero-grazing" targets, and its NBSAP recommends the construction of fences to avoid human-wildlife conflicts, both of which would negatively impact livestock mobility.

Livestock is discussed in these documents from both the adaptation and the mitigation perspectives. Some strategies highlight necessary adaptation measures to ensure that livestock-keeping systems adapt to climate change, such as breed selection (Uganda) or tapping into traditional knowledge, innovation and practices (Kenya, Tanzania). Other strategies promote efficient livestock systems as a promising avenue for mitigation, either through climate-smart dairy value chains (Uganda) or as part of climate-smart agriculture (Kenya). In most documents, however, the emphasis is on improving livestock management as part of crop-based systems rather than on pastoralism. Nevertheless, we found some possible entry points for pastoralism-based strategies, especially in NBSAPs. These tend to take a more integrated approach to landscapes and ecosystem management, including rangeland health. Kenya's NBSAP, for example, identifies the blockage of dry-season refuge for livestock and wildlife as a threat to biodiversity in the rangelands. Traditional animal husbandry is regarded positively (Kenya), and traditional knowledge and practices are to be promoted (Kenya, Tanzania). While Uganda's plans are hostile to pastoralism, its NBSAP embraces agroecological strategies that regard local communities as the real stewards of natural resources.

In Ethiopia, the NDCs do not explicitly mention pastoralism, but the Livestock Master Plan (LMP) dedicates a section to pastoral and agropastoral areas and provides policy recommendations intended to deliver socio-economic and ecological benefits.

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*37 CIDSE. 2024. Protecting the human rights of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities to halt biodiversity loss. Co-authored by Bockemühl C, Claeys P, Farrelly M & Ulmer K. Policy brief. https://www.cidse.org.*

*Credit: MISA*

There is a need for a more coherent treatment and integration of pastoralism in both NDCs and NBSAPs, including through interministerial coordination. Adding to these complex and somewhat contradictory trends, pastoral areas are increasingly targeted by private actors for the development of soil and biodiversity carbon credit projects in voluntary carbon markets. These projects are a growing threat to rangelands because they tend to be implemented without FPIC of the affected communities.

Soil carbon projects tend to impose restrictive grazing models that disrupt traditional pastoral mobility, while opaque agreements and weak regulatory protections leave pastoralist communities vulnerable to land alienation and loss of control over communal resources.[38] Without meaningful participation and safeguards, such schemes risk repeating historical patterns of dispossession under the guise of climate action, as many actors are making net-zero pledges in a context marked by the lack of regulatory frameworks around voluntary carbon markets.

**Lack of recognition of pastoralist culture:** Pastoralists' cultural systems are rooted in deep spiritual relationships with the land and animals. These systems have been central to community cohesion, adaptive management of rangelands and intergenerational knowledge transmission. However, the commodification of culture through tourism, top-down heritage designations and integration into neoliberal conservation frameworks often result in the appropriation or simplification of pastoralist identities, detaching practices from their original socio-ecological context.

At the same time, state-led governance structures frequently override traditional authority systems, undermining customary mechanisms for land use, conflict resolution and resource allocation. This weakens community agency, erodes collective land management and disrupts intergenerational knowledge transfer. In other words, it detrimentally impacts the intangible aspects of pastoralist culture.

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*38 MISA. 2025. Soil carbon credits: another wave of land alienation in northern Tanzania? https://afsafrica.org/maasai-international-solidarity-alliance-demands-moratorium-on-soil-carbon-projects-in-northern-tanzania/; Survival International (2023) "Blood Carbon: how a carbon offset scheme makes millions from Indigenous land in Northern Kenya". Report written by Simon Counsell. https://assets.survivalinternational.org/documents/2466/Blood_Carbon_Report.pdf*

*Credit: EPA*

**Structural discrimination, racism and epistemic injustice:** Pastoralists are often stereotyped as "backward" or "unproductive", which has justified decades of policy neglect, underinvestment, and social and political exclusion. This entrenched bias (de facto racist bias against so-called nomadic lifestyles) fuels structural inequalities and limits pastoralists' political voice and representation, especially for women. Women's participation in public decision-making varies greatly among pastoralist groups. However, in many cases, women are limited to indirect involvement rather than full participation.

This is sometimes due to cultural norms, but often it is because women's triple burden—productive work in livestock husbandry, reproductive work, and care work for family and community—restricts their time and capacity to participate actively in land management, markets and governance.[39] Similarly, the stigma against pastoralist communities affects the legal enforcement of their customary rights. Pastoralists often lack legal recognition of customary land rights, despite their affirmation in national and international legal frameworks.

Courts and administrative processes are costly and biased in favour of formalised and individual land ownership, making it nearly impossible for affected communities to seek redress or justice.[40] Negative stereotypes, state discrimination and a lack of understanding of the contributions of pastoralism to biodiversity conservation explain the lack of attention to pastoralism in the United Nations (UN) and other international policy fora, leading to a lack of adequate policies and legal frameworks supporting pastoralism as a viable livelihood and land-use system.

International advocacy by pastoralist organisations has led to the declaration of 2026 as the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists (IYRP2026),[41] which will hopefully address this gap. In parallel, there has been a lack of people-led interdisciplinary research on pastoralism, traditional management methods and the various factors leading to the transformation of pastoral systems, creating a form of epistemic injustice. Too often, research is framed from the outside and already comes with a specific analytical lens/framework that includes stereotypes or colonial narratives/prejudices, making it hard to shift to a positive narrative around pastoralists and pastoralism.

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*39 IYRP Working Group on Pastoralism & Gender. 2024. Summary brief: Building on the knowledge and initiatives of pastoralist women. Secretariat of the IYRP Global Alliance. https://iyrp.info/working-groups*

*40 Kwokwo Barume A. 2010. Land rights of Indigenous Peoples in Africa with special focus on Central, Eastern and Southern Africa. IWGIA Document 115. Copenhagen: IWGIA*

*41 https://iyrp.info/*

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Pastoralists are facing difficulties in securing and defending their rights to use, access and make decisions over their land

# 3. WHAT IS OUR VISION?

We want to see a world where pastoralists are fully recognised citizens, whose human rights are respected and protected, able to gain a decent livelihood from pastoralism as their way of life/production system. This means their livelihood system must be valued and understood as sustainable and critical to the sustainable development of dryland economies, not as remnants of the past but as valid and rational land-use systems that are valued, respected and promoted by policymakers.

Pastoralists often identify as and align with Indigenous Peoples' struggles. This strategic self-identification is a response to shared challenges, particularly those related to the protection and enforcement of customary land rights.[42] Mobile Indigenous Peoples (IPs) such as pastoralists or hunter-gatherers are a subset of IPs, whose livelihoods depend on common pool resources and who use mobility as a strategy and source of cultural identity.[43]

The international recognition of the human rights of pastoralists has advanced significantly thanks to the ratification of the 2007 UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), the 1989 International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention No. 169 and the 2018 UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas (UNDROP).

These affirm their rights to land, resources, FPIC and self-determined governance, which are at the heart of our vision. Other useful instruments include the 2010 Policy Framework for Pastoralism developed by the African Union,[44] which sets out guidelines and recommendations for its Member States on how to create an enabling policy environment for pastoralists, and the Protocol on Transhumance[45] adopted by IGAD in 2020.[46]

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*42 Hodgson DL. 2011. Being Maasai, becoming indigenous: postcolonial politics in a neoliberal world. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.*

*43 Kelly D et al. 2024. Pastoralism and rangelands: people and institutions – a glossary of terms. Version 1. International Rangeland Congress in collaboration with Global Alliance for the IYRP.*

*44 See: https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/30240-doc-policy_framework_for_pastoralism.pdf*

*45 See: https://icpald.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/IGAD-PROTOCOL-ON-TRANSHUMANCE-Final-Endorsed-Version.pdf*

*46 Also relevant is UNCCD's Decision 26/COP.14, which encourages Parties to recognise legitimate tenure rights, including customary rights, consistent with the national legal framework.*

*Our holistic vision encompasses the following dimensions:*

**Land:** Pastoralists' customary arrangements regarding ownership and tenure of natural resources (such as water and rangeland) are recognised: pastoral land-tenure systems are based primarily on the concept of the commons rather than private and exclusive land ownership. Lands and territories used by pastoralist people are recognised and protected, and any development, investment or extractive project taking place on their lands is subject to FPIC as is their right under international human rights law. Multiple and communal land use is facilitated. If there are competing claims on the land, these are addressed through collaborative governance models that incorporate mediation and public participation and ensure the full and informed participation of pastoralist institutions.

**Mobility:** Pastoral mobility is acknowledged as an asset for overall sustainable development, in both socio-economic terms (access to production factors and services) and environmental terms (contribution to biodiversity). Herd mobility over extensive areas, also across borders, is enabled through appropriate legal and policy frameworks, investments in relevant infrastructure and addressing insecurity. Pastoral mobility involves social practices, rituals and knowledge transmission that are essential to community integrity and cultural landscape formation.

**Human rights of pastoralists** are respected and protected. The rights to food, health and education are guaranteed, and pastoralist women and girls face no form of discrimination. State social and economic services (such as formal education, health services, access to water, livestock health/veterinary support or infrastructure development) are delivered in ways that are compatible with mobile systems of production. Respecting and supporting pastoralist institutions and self-organisation is key to making this happen. Pastoralists live in peace, security and harmony with their neighbours.

**Socio-ecological resilience:** Grazing lands continue to sustain the necessary conditions for pastoral systems to flourish, including through adequate climate action, rangeland restoration and drought prevention. Pastoralism is recognised as a sustainable livelihood/production system adapted to climate variability. Measures to mitigate climate change in drylands enable pastoralism through supportive policies and removing barriers.

**Pastoralist customary institutions** and civil society organisations actively contribute to policy design, implementation and evaluation. They are recognised by other stakeholders, particularly local and national governments, and are fully involved in decision-making at various levels from the local to the international. They are capacitated to involve themselves actively and effectively in designing, implementing and evaluating policies that affect pastoralists, including trade, land and agriculture policies. They are recognised as dynamic and evolving–and involving a diversity of actors playing equally important roles.[47]

**Cultural heritage** is thriving and pastoralists' rituals, symbols and different forms of knowledge, which represent their existence and their survival as a people, are maintained thanks to their foundational relationships to livestock and grazing lands.

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*47 CELEP. 2018. Policy brief: Sustainable pastoralism and land-use change in the East African drylands. https://www.celep.info/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Policybrief-land-use-change-May-2018-.pdf*

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National climate and biodiversity strategies tend to ignore the positive contributions of pastoralism

# 4. HOW CAN THE EU AND AFRICAN STATES SUPPORT PASTORALISM?

Pastoralism in the region directly contributes to several SDGs, particularly Zero Hunger (SDG 2) by providing meat and dairy, Poverty Reduction (SDG 1) through income generation, and Climate Action (SDG 13) by maintaining ecosystems through mobility-based land management. Hence, recognising pastoralism as a viable and at the core of our advocacy action, is essential to achieve inclusive development in Eastern Africa. A key step in that direction is recognising pastoralism as a system; this requires that all interventions funded or implemented by the EU take a systemic (and not sectoral) approach.

While we provide some guidance for pro-pastoralist policies below, it is important to recognise the diversity of pastoralist groups and the fact that not all pastoralists are at the same level of vulnerability. Some are well-off with stable livelihoods. Others, once stable in pastoral production, today find themselves in danger of losing their livelihoods. Still others have fallen out of the pastoral system altogether, own no livestock or land, and live in shanties with no access to social amenities. This diversity must be reflected in programmes and policies supporting pastoralism in context-specific settings.

### MEASURE 1 - Protect pastoralists' lands and livestock mobility

- **Take action to protect and reduce pressure on rangelands.** Reduce and avoid rangeland conversion resulting from inappropriate land uses (e.g. crop monocultures, tree plantations, afforestation) that diminish the diversity and multifunctionality of rangelands, especially on Indigenous, pastoral and communal lands.[48] A similar level of global commitment is needed to halt indiscriminate rangeland conversion as there has been for halting deforestation.[49]
- **Keep rangelands as commons** to allow flexible, productive and sustainable use of the drylands. Ensure pastoralists' grazing areas are not encroached upon, to protect livestock mobility and ensure that conservation policies promote co-existence rather than the separation of humans and nature.[50]
- **Enable multiple land uses through appropriate planning and statutory tenure**. Provide for the development and maintenance of livestock corridors, including the establishment of bylaws for their flexible use (e.g. compulsory during the cropping season, recommended in other seasons), provisions for setting dates when farmlands can be "liberated" for grazing after harvest, and provisions for ensuring that urban expansion does not hinder mobility.

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*48 UNCCD. 2024. Global Land Outlook Thematic Report on Rangelands and Pastoralism. Bonn: UNCCD, page vi.*

*49 IYRP Land Degradation Neutrality Working Group. 2024. Global action for sustainable rangelands and pastoralism to achieve Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN): a science-to-policy review, with recommendations for the UNCCD Conference of Parties. Working Paper. https://iyrp.info*

*50 MISA. 2024. A Maasai conservation vision. https://afsafrica.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/masaai-conservation-vision.pdf*

*Credit: MISA*

- **Identify and protect strategic land areas for pastoralists.** Ensure FPIC and conduct human rights-based impact assessments prior to any investment or development project, including those under the "green transition".[51] Put an end to any form of grabbing of pastoral grazing areas or to any developments that are not compatible with pastoralism.
- **Recognise and address the historical and political drivers** of environmental degradation and overgrazing, such as induced land scarcity.
- **Facilitate transboundary movements** of pastoralists with their herds, including through transboundary agreements.[52] Contribute to regional and continental integration and security by supporting the AU and IGAD to assure implementation of these policies and protocols.
- **Hold companies accountable** if they disrupt pastoralist livelihoods or human rights, be it for the extraction of minerals, conservation, tourism, carbon credit projects or through the import of milk powder that destroys pastoralists' dairying activities.
- **Support** and facilitate pastoralists' **access to courts and justice** in case of land alienation, human rights abuse and all other infringements on their rights as citizens.

*51 Davies J. 2024. Opportunities and challenges of the green transition for pastoralism and indigenous people in Africa. Paper requested by the European Parliament's Committee on Development (PE754.455) https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/IDAN/2024/754455/EXPO_IDA(2024)754455_EN.pdf*

*52 FAO. 2016. Improving governance of pastoral lands. Implementing the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security. Governance of Tenure, Technical Guide 6. Rome: FAO.*

## MEASURE 2 - Support food and water security and economic resilience

- **Support participatory rangeland management** projects to ensure that local-level resource management institutions are empowered for land-use planning and implementation.
- **Facilitate** pastoralists' **access to reliable information** on biomass availability, biomass quality, surface water availability, herd concentration and market prices for livestock and staple grains along the transhumance routes (see Box 2), through mobile phones and free access to data.
- **Re-assess** and **reform economic policies** that harm rangelands and pastoralists. Replace subsidies for supplemental feed that lead to rangeland degradation with economic alternatives, such as risk management, livestock insurance and mobile abattoirs. Lift market barriers and encourage animal diversity, good health and locally adapted breeds.[53] Ensure fair access to markets so pastoralists can exchange livestock commodities with other staples at favourable caloric terms of trade.
- **Provide assets to women and youth,** such as dairy cows, sheep or goats: this is a powerful way to provide valuable, and valued, start-up capital.
- **Help** develop the **marketing and local trading of milk** during the wet seasons, by developing context-appropriate milk standards and promoting investment in services and decentralised infrastructure such as mini-dairies and local processing facilities.[54] Pastoral dairying can support poor pastoralists, especially women, and increase their food security. It should be done in a way that does not lead to intensive production through specialised herds that would no longer ensure multifunctionality and resilience.
- **Promote diversity of opportunities and livelihoods** through adequate investments in human resources such as access to information, education, vocational training, alternative skills, etc.
- **Protect the rights of pastoralists as local smallholder producers** in the context of trade liberalisation agreements. Pastoralists who are dairy producers should not have to compete with subsidised imported milk coming from the EU. Ensure that the creation of an enabling environment for private-sector development does not undermine the livelihood of pastoralists and make sure that any trade complements local food production.

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*53 IYRP Land Degradation Neutrality Working Group. 2024. Global action for sustainable rangelands and pastoralism to achieve Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN): a science-to-policy review, with recommendations for the UNCCD Conference of Parties. Working Paper. https://iyrp.info*

*54 CELEP. 2018. Policy brief: Pastoral dairying in Eastern Africa: how could Europe support it? https://www.celep.info/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Statement-Celep-May-2018-final-.pdf*

*Credit: MISA*

**MEASURE 3 - Invest in decentralised infrastructure development and ensure people-led service delivery in pastoral areas**

- **Facilitate access to livestock services** and improve veterinary services, especially for poor pastoralists, through mass animal vaccinations and participatory disease surveillance. Where relevant, increase access to high-quality veterinary drugs and animal feed. Animal-health services need to be adapted to the herders' mobile lifestyle.[55]
- **Support pro-pastoralism investments** to help redress the historical under-investment and malinvestment in the rangelands.
- **Support initiatives to improve local service delivery** (formal education, health services, access to water) in ways that are compatible with and do not undermine mobile systems of production and pastoralist knowledge systems.
- **Promote and implement gender-responsive programmes and policies.** Support education, health and other social services adapted to the needs of women and girls, through distance-adapted solutions, pastoralist-friendly schedules and gender-sensitive approaches.[56] In line with the Mera Declaration, ensure equal rights of pastoralist women, recognise their key roles and contributions, and respect their right to both formal and informal education.[57]

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*55 Jenet A et al. 2016. The path to greener pastures: pastoralism, the backbone of the world's drylands. https://vsf-international.org/project/pastoralism-report/*

*56 IYRP Working Group on Pastoralism & Gender. 2024. Summary brief: Building on the knowledge and initiatives of pastoralist women. Secretariat of the IYRP Global Alliance. https://iyrp.info*

*57 Mera Declaration of the Global Gathering of Women Pastoralists. 2010. https://foodgovernance.com/2010/11/26/mera-declaration-of-the-global-gathering-of-women-pastralists/*

## MEASURE 4 - Ensure socio-ecological resilience grounded in the pastoralist logic of flexibility and mobility

- **Include pro-pastoralism strategies in National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) and Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)**[58] for their ability to address biodiversity loss, climate change, overgrazing, soil erosion, invasive species, drought and wildfires.[59] Ensure coherence and coordination across both climate and biodiversity strategies and the actors responsible for implementation. Make sure that livestock mitigation and adaptation strategies do not have a negative impact on pastoralism and that they facilitate mobility and sustain rangeland health and biodiversity, especially through communal grazing land management.
- **Design rangeland restoration projects** that strengthen the resilience of pastoralist livelihoods as part of the "green transition".[60]
- **Design and implement nature-conservation measures** that reduce and halt biodiversity loss (above and below ground) by harnessing synergies with pastoralists' practices and extensive livestock production systems that boost rangeland health, productivity and resilience.[61] Promote and implement approaches to biodiversity conservation that are inclusive and do not rely on the separation of humans and nature and do not rely on the use of force/military.
- **Do not support or invest in carbon or biodiversity credit projects** developed through voluntary carbon markets because these are not properly regulated, do not ensure FPIC and may have negative impacts on pastoralism and mobility.
- **Uphold the rights of pastoralists in protected areas** and wider landscapes and support conservation measures that contribute to pastoralists' livelihood resilience including Indigenous and local community-conserved areas that support pastoral livestock systems.[62]
- **Explore and apply new conservation approaches and frameworks**, such as Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Mechanisms (OECMs), in both securing the access and tenure rights of mobile pastoralists over their land, territories, and other natural resources, and ensuring in situ conservation of biodiversity.[63]

## MEASURE 5 - Enhance pastoralist institutions, voices and culture

- **Support initiatives to strengthen and amplify pastoralists' voices** and legal empowerment in defending and further developing their land-use systems through enhancing local institutions and pastoralist organisations.
- **Finance the participation** of pastoralists in international processes, with an emphasis on supporting women-only and women-led groups to strengthen women's confidence and capacities, educating women leaders and creating leadership opportunities for them.[64]
- **Eliminate gender-based violence** and address its drivers through education programmes for men, women, youth and children to ensure that women understand and exercise their rights.

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*58 Crumpler K et al. 2022. Regional analysis of the nationally determined contributions in sub-Saharan Africa – Gaps and opportunities in the agriculture and land use sectors. Environment and Natural Resources Management Working Paper 94. Rome: FAO.*

*59 UNCCD. 2024. Global Land Outlook Thematic Report on Rangelands and Pastoralism. Bonn: UNCCD, page vi.*

*60 Davies J. 2024. Opportunities and challenges of the green transition for pastoralism and indigenous people in Africa. Paper requested by the European Parliament's Committee on Development (PE754.455).*

*61 Ibid.*

*62 Yılmaz E, Tatpati M, Davies J, Waters-Bayer A, Naghizadeh N, Moghani H & Ndulet E. 2024. Position paper: Pastoralism and protected areas. IYRP Global Alliance. https://iyrp.info/sites/default/files/2025-02/IYRP-WG-Bioversity-position-paper-MP-PAs_rev-250203.pdf*

*63 Ibid.*

*64 Ibid.*

*Credit: Freepik*

## MEASURE 6 - Raise awareness and address negative stereotypes

- **Explicitly recognise the value of pastoralism in EU policies regarding Africa**, particularly in EU development, humanitarian, climate, security/defence and trade policies (giving attention to policy coherence for development).
- **Contribute to a more nuanced/balanced narrative in global climate debates** about the role of sustainable livestock systems, including pastoralism, in transforming agri-food systems.
- **Contribute to international recognition of the importance of pastoralism,** not only in Eastern Africa but globally, for ecologically oriented production of protein-rich food, through support of the IYRP 2026 initiative.

## MEASURE 7 - Finance public research on pastoralism

- **Address research gaps** by supporting the gathering of adequate data and information around pastoralism and pastoralists to inform people-led planning, policy and resource sharing.
- **Make sure** pastoralists are **key actors who frame the research** and its objectives, and not just objects of research by using participatory action research (PAR) approaches and transdisciplinary methods.
- **Integrate pastoralist women and girls** into action research and build their capacities to carry out their own research on pastoralism and rangeland issues, building on their own specific knowledge, innovations and initiatives.

Pastoralist strategies protect rangeland plant species diversity and tree cover, enhancing biodiversity

# ANNEX

## Pastoralism in the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) of Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, and Ethiopia

### Entry Points for Pro-Pastoralist Policies and Potential Threats

## TANZANIA

**NDC 2021-2030:**
Livestock is mentioned predominantly as something that must be adapted to climate change. There is no explicit mention of pastoralism. However, some of the language suggests that pastoralism can play a role in adaptation contributions.

**NBSAP 2025-2030:** The document is not yet well developed. It does not mention pastoralism explicitly, but some language is suggestive of pastoralism. Note: Tanzania's NBSAP 2025-2030 is a draft; therefore, its previous NBSAP (2015-2020) was also analysed.

**NBSAP 2015-2020:** Livestock and pastoralism are framed as the cause of ecosystem degradation. The Livestock Ministry is identified as one of several other ministries responsible for implementing biodiversity targets, but it is not clear what its role is. Some language has the potential for a positive interpretation of pastoralism.

| Tanzania | Entry points | Potential threats | Other relevant information |
|---|---|---|---|
| **NDC 2021-2030** | Adaptation contributions in the livestock sector (p. 9) **include**:<br>• "Promot[ing] local and modern climate resilience knowledge for sustainable pasture and rangeland management systems and practices."<br><br>Adaptation contributions in the land use and human settlements development sector (p. 11) **include**:<br>• "Promot[ing] resilient land use planning and management." | Adaptation contributions in the livestock sector (p. 9) **include**:<br>• "Enhanc[ing] livestock productivity through climate-smart interventions."<br><br>"Each of the sectoral ministries… will prepare sector specific initiatives. Each initiative…where appropriate…[consists of] REDD+ implementation in order to attract international climate finance" (p. 20-21). | Adaptation contributions in the livestock sector (p. 9) **include**:<br>• "Enhanc[ing] climate resilient livestock infrastructures and services."<br>• "Promot[ing] livelihood diversification of livestock keepers."<br>• "Promot[ing] accessible mechanisms for livestock keepers against related shocks, including livestock insurances."<br>• "Strengthen[ing] livestock research and development." |

| Tanzania | Entry points | Potential threats | Other relevant information |
|---|---|---|---|
| **NBSAP 2025-2030** | **Target 10-1:** "Enhance biodiversity and sustainability in agriculture, aquaculture, fisheries, and forestry;" and **Target 10-2:** "By 2030, agro-ecological practices including agroforestry and permaculture for local communities enhanced for improved crop productivity and food security" (p.6) **entail**:<br>• "Control[ing] destruction of drylands and promote traditional and sustainable crop-livestock management technologies."<br><br>**Target 22-1**: "By 2030, participation in decision-making and access to justice and information related to biodiversity for all is ensured;" and **Target 22-2**: "By 2030, traditional knowledge, innovations, practices, and technologies promoted and applied" (p. 11-12) **entail**:<br>• "Implement[ing] policies and strategies that promote access to justice and information related to biodiversity by all stakeholders, including local communities, ensuring respect to their cultures, traditional knowledge, customary laws and authorities, and rights over lands, water, fisheries and other resources."<br>• "Establish[ing] mechanisms for involvement of traditional leadership in local planning related to biodiversity."<br>• "Develop[ing] and implementing integrated and participatory biodiversity management." | **Target 21-1:** "By 2030, knowledge, the science base and technologies relating to biodiversity, its status, values, functioning and trends are improved, widely shared and applied;" and **Target 21-2:** "By 2030, best data, information, and knowledge are accessible to decision-makers and practitioners to guide effective biodiversity governance" (p. 11) **entail**:<br>• "Strengthen[ing] mechanisms for controlling traditional practices/taboos harmful to biodiversity."<br>• "Promot[ing] use of traditional knowledge that enhance biodiversity conservation."<br>• "Strengthen[ing] strategies to promote and preserve cultural heritage." | **Target 2:** "By 2030, ensure that at least 30% of areas of degraded terrestrial, inland water and coastal and marine ecosystems are under effective restoration in order to enhance biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services, ecological integrity and connectivity" (p. 1-2) **entails**:<br>• "Prepar[ing] and implement[ing] restoration plans for degraded areas."<br>• "Securing buffer zones and corridors to reconnect core protected areas."<br>• "Promot[ing] integrated ecosystem management approach in coastal and marine, and terrestrial protected areas."<br>• "Promot[ing]and strengthen[ing] Regional Cooperation on protection and conservation of trans-boundary terrestrial and marine protected areas."<br><br>**Target 4-1:** "By 2023, genetic diversity of native, wild, and domesticated terrestrial, coastal and marine, and inland waters' species loss is reduced by 30%;" and **Target 4-2:** "By 2030, human-wildlife conflicts reduced by 40%" (p. 2-3) **entail**:<br>• "Establish[ing] inventory of threatened genetic species of…farmed and domesticated animals including their wild relatives."<br>• "Develop[ing] and implement[ing] management plans for threatened genetic diversity of…farmed and domesticated animals…"<br><br>**Target 4-4:** "By 2030, human-wildlife conflicts reduced by 40%" (p. 2-3) **entails**:<br>• "Enhanc[ing] outreach programs to promote human-wildlife co-existence."<br><br>**Target 8:** "Minimized impact of climate change on terrestrial, freshwater, coastal and marine habitats, and other vulnerable ecosystems to maintain their integrity and build resilience by 2030" (p. 5-6) **entails**:<br>• "Implement[ing] nature-based solutions and ecosystems-based approaches to prevent and minimize negative impacts of climate change on people and biodiversity."<br><br>**Target 10-1**: "Enhance biodiversity and sustainability in agriculture, aquaculture, fisheries, and forestry" and **Target 10-2:** "By 2030, agro-ecological practices including agroforestry and permaculture for local communities enhanced for improved crop productivity and food security" (p.6) **entail**:<br>• "Develop[ing] and implement[ing] sustainable rangeland management plans."<br><br>**Target 11**: "By 2030, nature's contributions to people including provisioning and regulating ecosystem services are restored, maintained, and enhanced" (p. 6-7) **entails**:<br>• "Promot[ing] nature-based solutions and ecosystem-based approaches for the benefit of all people and nature."<br>• "Develop[ing] and implement[ing] programs to enhance ecosystem functions and services." |

| Tanzania | Entry points | Potential threats | Other relevant information |
|---|---|---|---|
| **NBSAP 2015-2020** | **Target 18:** "By 2020, traditional knowledge, innovation and practices relevant for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity respected and safeguarded" (p. 115-116) **entails**:<br>• - "Promot[ing] use of traditional knowledge that enhance biodviersity conservation."<br>• - "Establish[ing] mechanism for involvement of traditional leadership in local planning."<br>• - "Strengthen[ing] strategies to promote and preserve cultural heritage." | "Coupled with unsustainable agricultural practices, expansion of agricultural and grazing land has led to fragmentation of natural habitats thereby escalating pressures on biodiversity" (p. 41).<br><br>"Farmers and livestock encroach into protected areas creating serious pressure to wildlife resources" (p. 41).<br><br>"Farmers and pastoralists in [deforested] areas are forced to migrate into virgin forests and other lands leading to further forest and land degradation in general" (p.50).<br><br>"Poor land productivity…has triggered migrations of people and their livestock in search for productive land, fodder and water, often to agriculture production areas. This has resulted in farmer-livestock keeper conflicts" (p. 54).<br><br>Tanzania's National Livestock Policy 2006 is cited as one of the policies used to address biodiversity (p. 58), and the rationale for the policy is "to commercialize the [livestock] industry and stimulate its development while conserving the environment."<br><br>**Target 14:** "By 2020, ecosystems that provide essential services, related to water, and contribute to health, livelihoods and well-being, are restored and safeguarded, taking into account the needs of women, local and vulnerable communities" (p. 80) **states that:**<br>• "Different ecosystems have continued to provide essential services to the human beings together with other creatures. But due to the [human] population increase and demand for different activities like agriculture, livestock keeping, constructions, etc., these ecosystems have been deteriorating time after time." | "High degradation is associated with poor farming practices and overgrazing that have greatly affected miombo woodlands in the plateau complement to the escalating population…, which will increase the demand for food resulting in more habitat loss and pressure on biodiversity in natural ecosystems" (p. 26).<br><br>"In recognition of the potential for indigenous plants and animals that can widen the food based and provide opportunities for other uses…, Tanzania has mandated organisations such as the Tropical Pesticide Research Institute and selected livestock research institutions to ensure protection of the genetic resources" (p. 30).<br><br>The National Land Policy of 1995 is cited as one of the policies used to address biodiversity, and it addresses the "protection of sensitive areas; village land demarcation; unplanned settlements; protection of public open spaces and other urban land for public use; urban agriculture; village land use planning; conflict in land uses; overlapped land use areas (pastoralism and wildlife); coastline land use; and protection of fragile and sensitive lands and issues several statements to enforce this" (p. 56).<br><br>*Note: Tanzania renewed its National Land Policy in 2023.*<br><br>**Target 13:** "By 2020, strategies to reduce genetic erosion [are] developed and implemented to maintain genetic diversity of cultivated plants, farmed and domesticated animals and their wild relatives" (p. 79).<br><br>The National Environmental Policy is cited, and the policy objectives for the livestock sector (p. 133) **entail**:<br>• "Improvement and conservation of grazing lands and preservation of feed resources."<br>• "Promotion of mechanisms for resolving conflicts among different land use interests (wildlife protection, forestry, pastoralism and agriculture)." |

## KENYA

**NDC 2031-2035:**

Livestock is mentioned as a cause of emissions but not singled out. Via climate-smart agriculture, livestock is also viewed as part of mitigation and adaptation strategies. The CSA strategies also explicitly mention the empowerment of smallholders and pastoralists. Tapping into local, traditional, and Indigenous knowledge is listed as an adaptation strategy and "loss and damage intervention," possibly indicating that traditional pastoralism could be valued, but this is only a potential interpretation.

**Kenya NBSAP 2019-30:**

Livestock and pastoralism are mentioned as causes of degradation, but it is always explained within Kenya's socioeconomic context. Traditional animal husbandry is regarded positively, and its abandonment is cited as the cause of widespread degradation. Pastoralism is viewed as an ecosystem, within which pastoral lifestyles and wildlife coexist, and the Maasai Mara and Samburu are explicitly mentioned. The blockage of dry season refuge for livestock and wildlife is also identified as a threat to biodiversity in the rangelands, indicating the understanding of the importance of mobility.

| Kenya | Entry points | Potential threats | Other relevant information |
|---|---|---|---|
| **NDC 2031-2035** | Mitigation strategies (p. 13) **include**:<br>• "Promotion of climate smart agriculture with emphasis on crop and animal husbandry, including efficient livestock management systems while empowering smallholder farmers and pastoralists through enhancement of their capacities." | Prioritized adaptation strategies (p. 21) **include**:<br>• "Implement[ing] Climate Smart Agricultural practices for increased productivity through value chain approach to support the transformation of agriculture (crops, livestock and fisheries) into a resilient, innovative, commercially oriented, competitive and modern sector." | "Emissions from the AFOLU [combined agriculture, land use change and forestry] sector have been increasing steadily since 1990 to 2022 due to a rising demand for agricultural land, deforestation activities, use of synthetic fertilizers, and increasing number of livestock" (p. 5-6).<br><br>The National Livestock Policy 2015, the Kenya Climate-Smart Agriculture Strategy 2017-2028, and the National Drought Management Authority Act 2016 are cited as "sectoral policies to support implementation of climate change adaptation and mitigation actions" (p. 7).<br><br>Adaptation strategies **include**:<br>"Enhance climate resilience in agriculture and agri-food systems for the attainment of food security through the promotion of inclusive climate-smart agricultural practices including but not limited to effective irrigation systems, sustainable land management, drought-tolerant crops and sustainable livestock production with special focus on smallholder farmers" (p. 20). |

| Kenya | Entry points | Potential threats | Other relevant information |
|---|---|---|---|
| **NBSAP 2019-2030** | 11 threats to the rangelands (woodlands, shrub lands, grasslands and deserts) are **listed**:<br>• "Subdivision and fencing."<br>• "Urban expansion and settlement."<br>• "Heavy grazing and conversion to rain-fed and irrigated agriculture."<br>• "Resource conflicts."<br>• "Human-Wildlife conflict."<br>• "Poaching for trophies and bush-meat."<br>• "Loss of keystone species."<br>• "Blockage of dry season wildlife and livestock refuges."<br>• "Poor planning of water points."<br>• "Poor management of catchment areas and upstream water over-abstraction."<br>• "Climate change." | "Most of the poor live in rural areas and depend on small farms and pastoralism. Population pressures and poverty combine to put large unsustainable demands on natural resources and the environment" (p. 39).<br><br>"Competition over land and with wildlife ... has become particularly intense where farms and permanent settlement invade wildlife ranges, leading to heightened crop and livestock depredations, and human and wildlife losses" (p. 45).<br><br>For sustainable utilization, one of the priority requirements is to "Utilize indigenous wild herbivores, alone or in combinations with livestock, where the use of domestic stock alone will degrade the land" (p. 73). | "The plants, animals and peoples within ecoclimatic zones interact to form distinctive human-modified ecosystems such as ... the migratory wildlife populations and pastoral lifestyles of savannah ecosystems such as Maasai Mara and Samburu" (p. 25).<br><br>For preservation of genetic diversity, one of the priority requirements is to "Reserve as many varieties as possible of crop plants, forage plants, timber trees, livestock, animals for agriculture and aquaculture, microbes and other domesticated organisms and their wild relatives" (p. 73).<br><br>"Agricultural output is still the mainstay of the economy and population growth, and poverty are still putting heavy pressure on land and natural resources. Overuse and degradation are particularly widespread across the marginal arable and pastoral areas. Weak tenure and poor access to credit makes it hard for the poor to invest in the conservation and improvement of farms, herds, land and natural resources" (p. 39).<br><br>"Even where habitat is relatively intact, degradation continues throughout much of Kenya. Examples include poor animal and farming husbandry practices leading to soil erosion, and loss of nutrients and productivity. Land and pasture degradation are particularly widespread in the marginal agricultural and pastoral areas where access to markets is poor and traditional husbandry practices have been abandoned" (p. 41). |

## UGANDA

**Uganda NDC 2025-2030:**

The livestock sector is regarded as a target for adaptation and an avenue for mitigation. Adapting livestock to climate change is primarily by way of breed selection. Mitigation strategies concerning livestock at one point flatly discourage pastoralism, by setting "zero grazing and stall feeding" as a target. However, there is also mention of mitigation via Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions (NAMA) and climate-smart dairy livestock value chains; there may be room for a positive interpretation here, but it does not seem likely. Agroforestry is mentioned as a way to provide fodder for stall feeding/moving away from grazing. Overall, Uganda's NDCs fail to recognize the adaptiveness of pastoralism itself and the potential for mitigation.

**Uganda NBSAP 2025-30:**

Livestock is cited as a cause of biodiversity loss, as well as a cause of human-wildlife conflict. Constructing fences is considered a solution, though in conjunction with "strategies for coexistence." The mention of coexistence, several mentions of invasive plants as threats to rangelands, the regard of local communities as "the real stewards of natural resources," and calls for the development of agroecological strategies seem to indicate that Uganda aims to preserve pastoralism. Interestingly, pastoralism is never explicitly mentioned. There is an opportunity here, but the use of fencing is a major threat to pastoralism.

| Uganda | Entry points | Potential threats | Other relevant information |
|---|---|---|---|
| **NDC 2025-2030** | • The priority adaptation action for rangelands is to "Protect, manage and restore rangeland," and the indicator is the "level of implementation (%) of the Rangeland Management and Pastoralist Policy" (p. 16). | The priority mitigation action for livestock management in the cattle corridor is to "promote improved cattle breeds and feeds, improve water availability for livestock through constructing water dams and valley tanks, and establish fodder agroforestry plantations for zero grazing and stall-feeding" (p. 32).<br><br>Additional mitigation measures, regarding livestock, (p. 33) **include**:<br>• "...improved feed quality, supplement, and manure management."<br>• "Climate-Smart Dairy Livestock Value Chains [which seek to] increase agricultural milk productivity and incomes; adapt and build resilience to climate change along the milk production value chain; and reduce greenhouse gas emissions." | Priority adaptation actions for the livestock sector **include**:<br>• "Promote highly adaptive and productive livestock breeds."<br>• "Promote livestock diversification."<br><br>For the intended outcome that is "climate resilient livestock production systems and value chains strengthened" (p. 20). |

| Uganda | Entry points | Potential threats | Other relevant information |
|---|---|---|---|
| **NBSAP 2025-2030** | "...the livestock industry has been one of the major contributors to agricultural GDP growth" (p. 39).<br><br>"[The genetic variability/genetic base] is now being rapidly eroded as breeds developed for intensive management regimes are replacing local races of livestock" (p. 51).<br><br>"...addressing the root causes, enhancing community awareness, and implementing proactive strategies for coexistence between wildlife and communities are essential steps to mitigate human-wildlife conflict and ensure the long-term harmony between local populations and wildlife conservation efforts" (p. 53).<br><br>**Strategic Objective 3** "advocates for benefits of biodiversity conservation and sustainable use to flow back to the local communities, women and men whose livelihoods are affected, and who are often the real stewards of a natural resource" (p 140). | "Lions...have declined [in] population...due to several factors including habitat loss, poisoning by livestock farmers and illegal trade in lion body parts" (p. 24).<br><br>Threats to forests and its biodiversity (p. 32) **include**:<br>• "Encroachment, especially in the savanna woodland, for the purpose of agricultural expansion and pastures for livestock grazing."<br><br>"There is a general feeling that fencing of protected areas will significantly reduce the cases of human-wildlife conflicts around protected areas..." (p. 53).<br><br>"The trends and proportion of degraded and threatened habitats were based on work assessing the future trends of land cover and land use. The highest gains in the land amongst the land use systems were experienced in subsistence agricultural land and protected grasslands, while the highest losses were seen in unprotected grasslands and woodland/forest with low livestock densities" (p. 85). | "The NAGRC&DB plays a leading role in the production of quality livestock genetics as well as in developmental activities such as training and awareness raising of extension staff and farmers to improve their breeding techniques as well as their management of livestock" (p. 52).<br><br>12 species of invasive plants are identified as threats to rangelands (p. 55-56).<br><br>"...other threats include avian flu, Marburg, and Ebola that are not only a danger to wildlife but also to humans and livestock" (p. 61).<br><br>**Strategic Objective 1: "**To reduce and manage negative impacts while enhancing positive impacts on biodiversity" (p. 105) **includes**:<br>• "By 2030, integrated management plans for areas under agriculture, forestry, fisheries and livestock, including protected areas, are in place and supported by spatial planning technologies and tools." |

## ETHIOPIA

**Ethiopia NDC 2020-2030:**

Livestock, as part of agriculture, is the most significant contributor to GHG emissions. It is mentioned mostly as something to be adapted to climate change. However, the NDC refers to the Livestock Master Plan, which supports "sustainable pastoral and agropastoral production." Perhaps this can be interpreted as a mitigation strategy.

**Ethiopia NBSAP 2015-2020:**

Note: Ethiopia's latest NBSAP is under development and has not yet been released.

Ethiopia's NBSAP identifies livestock population density and related overgrazing as a threat to biodiversity in a variety of ecosystems. However, the conversion of grazing land into agricultural land and settlements is also viewed as a threat to biodiversity. Pastoralism is mentioned explicitly. Herders are recognized as custodians of biodiversity, and Ethiopia recognizes the loss of traditional knowledge and institutions as a threat to biodiversity. The NBSAP aims to document what it refers to as community knowledge and integrate it in relevant national legislation and development strategies and international obligations. An ecosystem-based approach to rangeland management is proposed, but at the same time, rangeland enclosure and the expansion, demarcation, and enforced management of Protected Areas is also proposed- presenting a threat to pastoralism. There is also a plan to ban open grazing. The NBSAP adopts the Climate Resilient Green Economy initiative's sectoral approach for "efficiency improvements to the livestock value chain," and plans to support pastoralists by identifying niche markets and avenues for value addition. Overall, Ethiopia's NBSAP contain potential for pro-pastoralist policy, but its more concrete strategies and plans contradict the basic tenets of pastoralism.

| Ethiopia | Entry points | Potential threats | Other relevant information |
|---|---|---|---|
| **NDC 2020-2030** | "The livestock sector exhibits the second most important mitigation abatement" (p. 13).<br><br>"Ethiopia has already undertaken important adaptation efforts in [the Agriculture, Forestry, and other Land Use (AFOLU)], and will further expand and prioritise measures such as...rangeland management...crop and livestock insurance...[and] ecosystem-based adaptation" (p. 18). | Policy interventions in the livestock sector (p. 13) **include**:<br><br>• "Enhanc[ing] efficiency and productivity in livestock subsectors."<br><br>• "Agricultural mechanisation – Replacing cattle/oxen with tractors for farmers and smallholders." for which the indicators are the "Number of livestock reduced" and "number of tractors distributed."<br><br>"Ethiopia will further expand and prioritise measures such as climate-smart agriculture..." (p. 18). | "...the agricultural sector, particularly livestock, will remain as the main contributor to greenhouse gas emissions in the coming years, followed by the Land Use and Forestry sector" (p. 10-11).<br><br>"Ethiopia has already undertaken important adaptation efforts in [the Agriculture, Forestry, and other Land Use (AFOLU)], and will further expand and prioritise measures such as...livestock diversification...[and] drought-resistant animal breeding..." (p. 18). |

| Ethiopia | Entry points | Potential threats | Other relevant information |
|---|---|---|---|
| **NBSAP 2015-2020** | "The farming communities and herders in Ethiopia have maintained diversified crops, livestock and associated biodiversity through their community knowledge and innovations...Rangeland and other natural resources management strategies amongst...the 'Gereb' herding and grazing arrangements between the Afar pastoralists and the Tigrayan farmers...are the most common traditional institutions involved in biodiversity conservation and sustainable utilization" (p. 36).<br><br>"Community knowledge associated with the use of biodiversity...is eroding due to various factors. ...weak integration of traditional knowledge with modern science, neglecting/undermining indigenous knowledge and practices are some of the major factors leading to less application of cultural practices related to biodiversity conservation and sustainable use. Furthermore, traditional institutions are weakened or undermined particularly by younger generations and development agencies" (p. 36).<br><br>"Livestock play important roles in providing food, household income, draught, farmyard manure and fuel, and ecological and social functions. In addition, livestock serve as sources of commodities for export" (p. 39).<br><br>"Conversion of...grazing lands...into agricultural land and settlements are some of the threats to biodiversity in Ethiopia" (p. 44).<br><br>"Protected areas have to be managed in close collaboration with local communities recognising their rights" (p. 74).<br><br>"Smallholders and pastoralists are custodians of biodiversity. Nevertheless, biodiversity is in danger of disappearing. Finding niche markets for selected species and their products is one possible way of ensuring the survival of biodiversity and enabling people who conserve them to earn more" (p. 80).<br><br>"**Target 17:** By 2020, community knowledge, innovations and practices of local communities related to biodiversity are documented, subject to the national legislation, and relevant international obligations, and integrated into the national development strategies with the full and effective participation of local communities" (p. 84). | "Livestock density is greater than the carrying capacity of the ecosystem. As a result, [the Montane Grassland Ecosystem] has experienced a considerable habitat and land degradation. The main threats to this ecosystem emanate from agricultural expansion, overgrazing and over harvesting of selected species. Currently...integrated soil and watershed management and area closure measures are being undertaken to rehabilitate the degraded areas" (p. 6).<br><br>"[The Dry Evergreen Montane Forests and Evergreen Scrub Ecosystem is] under threat of habitat conversion caused by deforestation for wood products, fire, agricultural expansion and overgrazing... State forests are given on concession and are administered by joint management of government and community through benefit sharing arrangements, carbon trade and other incentive measures" (p. 7).<br><br>"[In the Moist Montane Forest Ecosystem], human activities such as timber extraction, commercial coffee and tea plantations, small-scale agriculture and grazing expansions and settlement are the major threats" (p. 9).<br><br>"[In the Desert and Semi-desert Ecosystem], overgrazing, bush encroachment and invasive species...are among the factors threatening [this ecosystem]" (p. 13).<br><br>"Illegal logging, firewood collection, overgrazing and invasive species are threats to forests through the country... Because of the increasing human and livestock pressures on the resource base, and lack of sustainable management, the status of protected areas including National Forest Priority Areas (NFPAs) is deteriorating" (p. 22-23).<br><br>"...banning open grazing and enclosing rangelands are undertaken to ease the pressure on rangelands and forage resources of the country" (p. 25).<br><br>"Several protected areas...have been gazetted at the regional level" (p. 33).<br><br>"Ecosystem based approaches of resources management are required...To achieve this target...sustainable rangeland ...ecosystems management practices need to be adopted. These require development and implementation of regulations and guidelines to control open access over resources on grazing lands..." (p. 72).<br><br>"By 2020, area coverage of ecologically representative and effectively managed protected areas (PAs) is increased from 14% to 20%... To implement this target, some of the selected PAs will require re-demarcation and development of new management plans" (p. 74). | "Other non-timber forest products such as forages from forest largely serve as the feed sources of livestock in the country. Fodder driving from forests provides 10% and 60% of the livestock feed in the wet and dry season, respectively" (p. 41).<br><br>"[Climate change] ...causes shortage of livestock feeds, disease outbreak, change in disease distribution and shrinkage of rangelands...Other effects of climate change include loss of traditional institutions and associated knowledge/practices" (p. 49).<br><br>"By 2020, technologies and innovation for increasing productivity of smallholder farmers and pastoralists are adopted" (p. 72).<br><br>"By 2020, provisions of alternative livelihoods, including jobs and alternative energy sources and use of energy efficient technologies for local communities are improved" (p. 72).<br><br>"Ethiopia has devised a strategy for Climate Resilient Green Economy (CRGE) that will allow a green growth path and fosters development and sustainability."<br><br>The CRGE initiative follows a sectoral approach, and as a part of that strategy, the government [planned] efficiency improvements to the livestock value chain; and Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD) as the best chances of promoting growth immediately, capturing large abatement potentials, and attracting climate finance for their implementation" (p. 54). |

# SIGNATORIES

**This research report is cosigned by four global networks: CELEP, MISA, AFSA and CIDSE. It is endorsed by the Eastern & Southern Africa (ESA) International Regional Support Group (IRSG) of the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists 2026. The scientific research included in this report was compiled by the four authors and coordinated by Priscilla Claeys from CAWR, Coventry University.**

**AFSA –** Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa – is a broad alliance of over 48 different civil society actors that are part of the struggle for food sovereignty and agroecology in 50 countries in Africa. The core purpose of AFSA is to influence policies and to promote African solutions for food sovereignty. AFSA serves as a continental platform for consolidation of issues pertaining to food sovereignty and together marshal a single and louder voice on issues and tabling clear workable solutions (https://afsafrica.org/about-us/).

**CAWR –** Centre for Agroecology, Water and Resilience - is driving innovative, transdisciplinary research on the understanding and development of resilient food and water systems internationally. Our research develops and integrates new knowledge in agroecological, hydrological, social, and environmental processes, as well as the pivotal role that communities play in developing resilience in food and water systems (https://www.coventry.ac.uk/research/areas-of-research/agroecology-water-resilience/).

**CELEP –** Coalition of European Lobbies for Eastern African Pastoralism – is an informal coalition of European members and Eastern African partners focusing on communication, knowledge management and lobbying in favour of pastoralism in Eastern Africa. The European and Eastern African organisations involved in CELEP reinforce each other's advocacy work and jointly develop their respective capacities to influence policy that affects the pastoralist populations in Eastern Africa (https://www.celep.info/).

**CIDSE** – Coopération Internationale pour le Développement et la Solidarité – is an international family of Catholic social justice organisations working for transformational change to end poverty and inequalities, challenging systemic injustice, inequity, destruction of nature, and promoting just and environmentally sustainable alternatives (https://www.cidse.org/).

**International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists 2026** - Declared by the UN General Assembly, the international year aims to raise awareness and advocate for the value of healthy rangelands and sustainable pastoralism. It calls for sustainable land management practices, improved or restored ecosystems, and equitable access to markets, livestock health and breeding (https://iyrp.info/).

**MISA** – Maasai International Solidarity Alliance – is an international alliance standing in solidarity with the Maasai of Northern Tanzania. We bring together over 20 international faith-based organisations, human rights organisations, international aid and development organisations, as well as grassroots organisations, individual activists, researchers and lawyers representing the Maasai in several land cases. Our main objective is to put an end to the human rights violations facing the Maasai of northern Tanzania (https://misasolidarity.org/).

CELEP · Maasai International Solidarity Alliance · AFSA Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa · CIDSE Together for global justice · IYRP 2026 International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists · Research Centre Agroecology, Water and Resilience | Coventry University